Approved For Release 2007/03/14 : CIA-RDP79T00826A001600010074-7 Top Secret		
25X	1	



DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

25X1

Top Secret



Approved For Release 2007/03/14 : CIA-RDP79T00826A0016000 0074-7

Information as of 1600 17 February 1967

25X1

HIGHLIGHTS

US and Communist forces are still engaged in stiff fighting in Pleiku-Kontum provinces. A series of clashes have taken place since 14 February in this area.

- I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
 Heavy contact is continuing between US and Communist
 forces in Pleiku-Kontum provinces (Paras. 1-3). The
 successful South Vietnamese Operation DAN CHI 279
 ended on 16 February with 331 Viet Cong reported killed
 (Para. 4). Operation BIG SPRING, targeted against the
 western edge of the Communists' War Zone "D," ended on
 16 February (Para. 5). US Marine Operation CHINOOK
 ended in northern Thua Thien Province on 16 February;
 CHINOOK II was initiated on 17 February in the same
 general area (Paras. 6-7). Civilian-run organizations
 have been formed to procure Viet Cong food supplies
 (Paras. 8-13).
- II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: The Constituent Assembly has approved an article empowering the legislature under the new constitution to vote out the prime minister and his cabinet (Paras. 1-2).

is nothing of significance to report.	There
V. Communist Political Developments:	
A captured let	ter

25X1

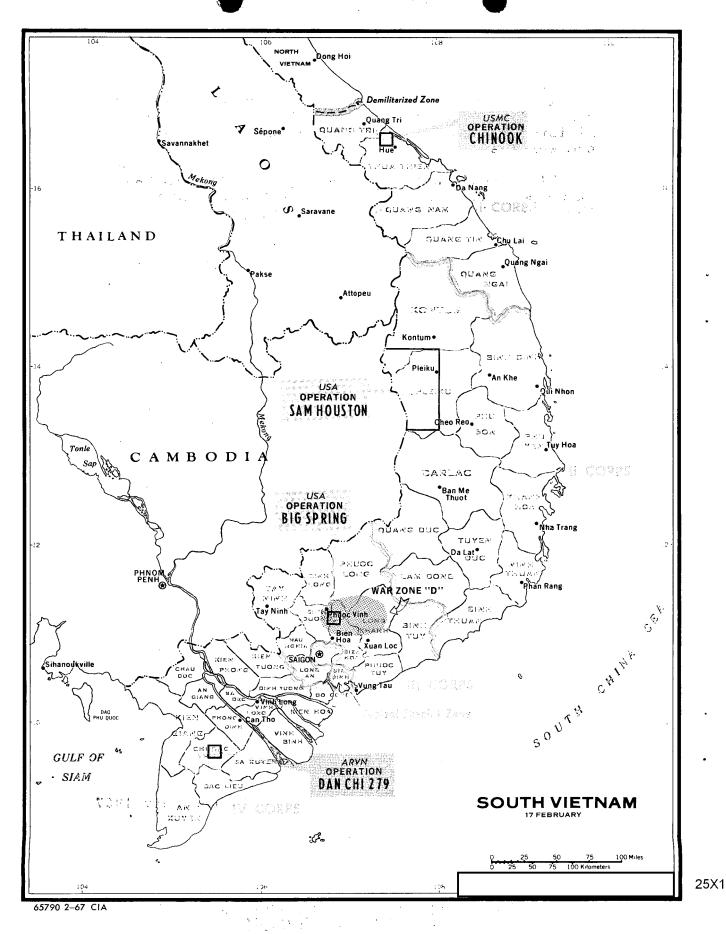
25X1

•

i

from Le Duan to cadre in South Vietnam reveals Hanoi's direction over the war in the South (Paras. 2-5). Hanoi has roundly criticized British Prime Minister Wilson for his attitude toward the Vietnam war (Para. 6).

VI. Other Major Aspects: The Communists have extended a road in the Laotian panhandle toward the South Vietnamese border (Paras. 1-2).



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. Heavy contact continued to be reported on 17 February--the fourth consecutive day--between Communist forces and units of the US 4th Infantry Division participating in Operation SAM HOUSTON in the central highlands of Pleiku and Kontum provinces near the Cambodian border.
- 2. As the result of several engagements on 16 February, the casualty toll now stands at 137 Communists killed compared with 39 Americans killed and 137 wounded.
- 3. These actions near the Cambodian border began on 14 February when infiltrating North Vietnamese tried to overrun one of three US field positions established within three miles of the border. The enemy force--estimated to be of regimental size--probably contains elements of the 1st and/or 10th North Vietnamese Army divisions, which traditionally operate in the Pleiku/Kontum/Cambodia border area.
- 4. The four-battalion South Vietnamese Army search-and-destroy Operation DAN CHI 279 ended on 16 February. This successful operation was conducted in the Mekong Delta province of Chuong Thien and resulted in enemy losses of 331 killed. Fifty Communist suspects were detained. Friendly casualties for this operation which began on 13 February were 32 killed (two US) and 119 wounded (seven US). Nine of ten US helicopters shot down while supporting the South Vietnamese soldiers have been retrieved, repaired, and returned to service. Viet Cong losses also included 56 weapons and large quantities of munitions which were captured and destroyed.

- 5. Operation BIG SPRING, a search-and-destroy operation conducted by four US Army battalions in northeastern Binh Duong Province, ended on 16 February. Seventeen Americans were killed and 124 wounded in this sweep of the western portion of Communist War Zone "D" which began on 31 January. Communist losses were reported as 43 killed. Twenty-five weapons, grenades, small-arm ammunition, and miscellaneous equipment were captured. Fifty bunkers, three trenches, and numerous bombs and mines were destroyed.
- 6. Operation CHINOOK, conducted in northern Thua Thien Province by one battalion of US Marines, ended on 16 February. This search-and-destroy operation, which began on 19 December, resulted in Communist losses of 261 killed and five captured. There were 706 Communist suspects detained. American losses were 25 killed and 185 wounded. Enemy losses also included 58 weapons and large quantities of rice captured.
- 7. Operation CHINOOK II began on 17 February in the same general area of Thua Thien Province. Two US Marine battalions have been committed to this search-and-destroy operation which will seek out Communist forces--estimated to number 1,500 men--and enemy base camp areas.

Creation of Civilian-Run Organizations to Procure Food for Viet Cong Units

- 8. Further clarification of the reported disbanding of Viet Cong military rear service groups and their replacement by specialized subsections of civilian forward supply councils has been obtained with receipt of the full translation of the relevant documents.
- 9. The change amounts simply to a shifting of responsibility for the purchase and supply of food for combat units from rear service groups

to forward supply councils, and not the disbanding of the rear service units, as previously reported. Neither will "military provision subsections," composed of reassigned rear service personnel, be established under forward supply councils for the procurement and transportation of all military provisions.

- 10. According to the full document just received -- a copy of a Central Office for South Vietnam resolution adopted at a 9 October 1966 conference-food needs for military units have increased to such an extent, "five or ten times," that rear service units can no longer perform all of their tasks in the rear and at the same time support units on the front line. For that reason, COSVN has ordered the establishment of "food subsections" subordinate to civilian-run forward supply councils at village, district, and province levels for the sole purpose of purchasing food supplies, providing for and supervising the storage of these food items, and managing the transport of the food to rear service units, which will then distribute them to combat units.
- 11. The new procurement system is to go into effect in three phases during 1967. Phase One, ending in March, involves the establishment of the food subsections and a determination of the subsections' specific duties.
- 12. During this phase, the food subsections will begin "development of sufficient purchase and requisition agencies," presumably meaning the recruitment in government-controlled markets of purchasing agents and firms who will agree to supply the Viet Cong regularly. The food subsections will, however, work under the close supervision of the rear service groups during this phase.

13. In Phases Two and Three, more and more responsibility will be shifted to the food subsections as they become more familiar with their duties, so that rear service units will eventually be able to concentrate entirely on procurement of other than food supplies and support of units on the front line.

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. During its session on 15 February, the Constituent Assembly approved a compromise version of article 41 dealing with the legislature's authority to propose the removal of the "government," i.e., the prime minister and his cabinet. As the article stands now, the legislature may recommend the replacement of all or part of the "government" by a two-thirds majority vote of both houses. That recommendation will be binding "unless the president has special reasons for rejecting it." If the president should veto the recommendation, a good possibility since the "government" presumably will be appointed by the president, the legislature can then make it binding by a three-fourths majority vote in both houses.
- 2. Although the legal means will exist for making a legislative vote of "nomconfidence" in the government stick, a three-fourths majority will be difficult to attain, in practice according to a US Embassy assessment. The Directorate's desire not to make a legislative recommendation binding was supported by the Democratic-Alliance Bloc, which is the largest in the assembly and by Dr. Phan Quang Dan. Those in favor of a binding agreement were the Southern Renaissance and Greater People's (GP) blocs. The latter group has been reduced in size to a small group, primarily of Central Vietnamese Dai Viet party members, following the recent withdrawal of 21 former GP members who favor the government line. Debate on the article, which had been expected to be lively, reportedly was orderly and unemotional.

17 February 1967

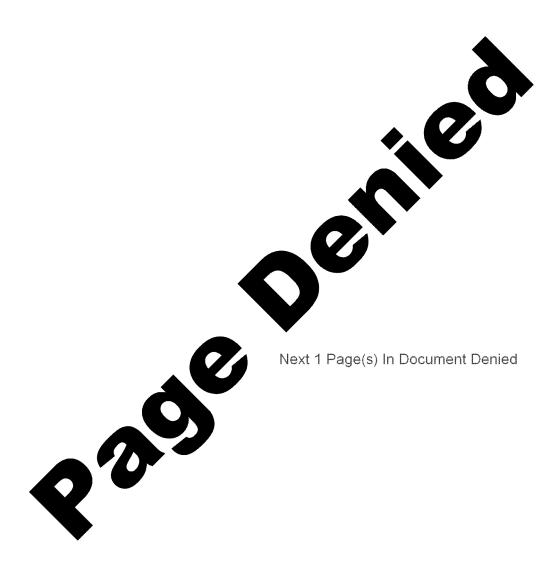
II-1

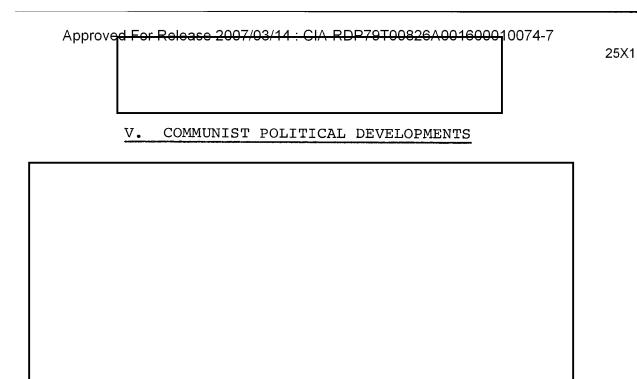
III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

17 February 1967

III-1





Hanoi Leader on War in South

- 2. A preliminary translation of a document recently captured in South Vietnam provides new evidence of Hanoi's control and direction of the Communist insurgency in the South. The document--a letter over the typed name of North Vietnamese First Party Secretary Le Duan--explains three resolutions of the North Vietnamese Central Committee evaluating the war in the South.
- 3. The letter appears to have been written in late 1965 or early 1966, and provides some insight into the reactions of the North Vietnamese leadership to the developing military situation in South Vietnam over the previous two years. The massive introduction of US troops into South Vietnam in 1965, for example, apparently caught the leadership by surprise. Although Le Duan explained that the party has always correctly analyzed the main trends of the revolution, he admitted that the situation "developed more quickly than we had expected."
- 4. The letter supports other evidence in captured documents that the North Vietnamese believed

17 February 1967

V-1

at the end of 1964 that they were reasonably close to defeating the ARVN and that a quick and dramatic military push would bring South Vietnam under Communist control. The introduction of US troops, however, changed Communist plans, causing Hanoi to conclude that it would be necessary to wage a protracted war, according to Le Duan. The letter reveals some dissatisfaction within the party over this policy. It criticized "right-wing comrades" who fear a protracted struggle and who are "blinded by the military power of the US."

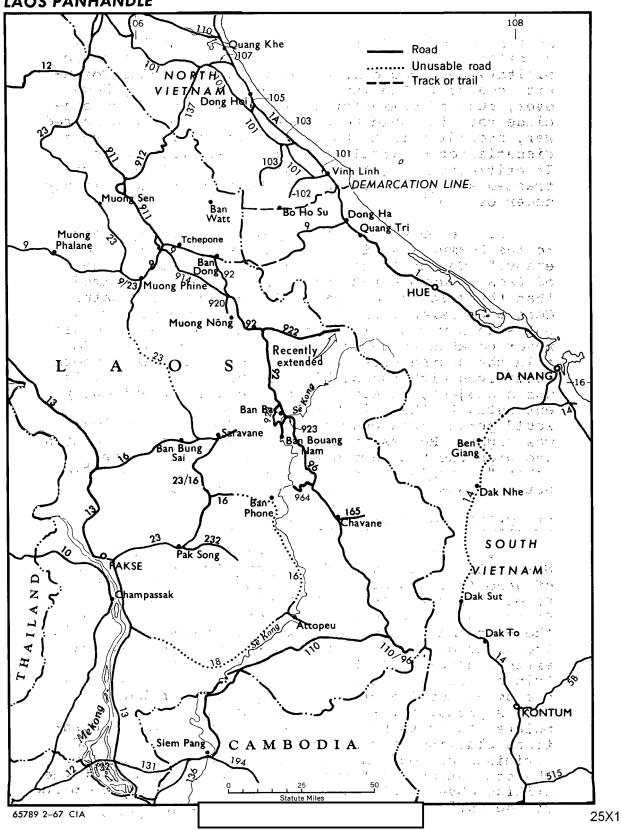
Le Duan's letter emphasized the importance to the Communists of a "military success over the enemy." The party first secretary used the analogy of Laos to demonstrate this principle. He claimed that the "victory of Nam Tha" made the "successful Geneva Conference of 1962" possible, and that without such a victory in South Vietnam Communists would never be able to negotiate on favorable terms. He told the southerners in so many words not to concern themselves with the problem of negotiations. was a subject, he said, which had been "unanimously entrusted to the politburo" and that the politburo would pursue this course when it decided the time was right. He was frankly critical of foreign allies who urge the Vietnamese to go to the conference table "as early as possible" and said that they did not understand the Vietnamese situation.

DRV Criticizes British Prime Minister

6. An article in the 17 February issue of the North Vietnamese party daily Nhan Dan included some of Hanoi's sharpest criticism to date of British Prime Minister Wilson. Completely ignoring that Prime Minister Wilson's most recent statements on the Vietnamese question were made in conjunction with the visit of Soviet Premier Kosygin to the UK, the article accused the British leader of being a "clumsy defender of the US aggressors" and the only one among the leaders of the US allies in Europe who is pleading the US cause. The article also pointed to Britain's role in the 1954 Geneva Convention, claiming that Wilson's failure to condemn US "criminal action" in his capacity as co-chairman of the convention was "hypocritical" and proved that the British Government was a "devoted, faithful accomplice of the US." 17 February 1967

V-2

LAOS PANHANDLE



Approved For Release 2007/03/14 : CIA-RDP79T00826A0016000	<u>1</u> 0074-7
	25X1

VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Continuing analysis of photography shows the first verifiable addition to the Laos panhandle road net reported this dry season. Photography shows that Route 922--one of the three principal routes used in past dry seasons to move supplies within Laos to the South Vietnam border--has been extended from its last reported terminus about five miles from the South Vietnamese border to a point 900 yards from the border.

25X1

2. There is no evidence of a motorable road on the South Vietnamese side of the border at this point. Thus, supplies trucked through Laos to the border still have to be moved from that point by porters.

17 February 1967

VI-1

25X1